

Statement on the Report of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board August 26, 2003

Today the Columbia Accident Investigation Board released its report on the tragic accident that claimed the lives of seven brave astronauts. These men and women assumed great risk in service to all humanity. On behalf of a grateful Nation, I once again recognize their sacrifices and those of their loved ones. Their service will never be forgotten.

Our Nation also owes its appreciation to Admiral Harold Gehman, Jr. (retired) as well as the other 12 members of the Columbia Accident Investigation Board. As

Board Chair, Admiral Gehman and his team have worked tirelessly over the past seven months conducting an exhaustive review of the circumstances surrounding this accident. The next steps for NASA under Sean O'Keefe's leadership must be determined after a thorough review of the entire report, including its recommendations.

Our journey into space will go on. The work of the crew of the *Columbia* and the heroic explorers who traveled before them will continue.

Remarks at a Dinner for Senator Christopher S. "Kit" Bond of Missouri in St. Louis August 26, 2003

Thanks for the warm welcome. It's such an honor to be here in the great State of Missouri. I am here because I believe Kit Bond is the right man for the United States Senate.

And I want to thank you for his—for your strong support for this fine Senator. Looks like you've got a few friends here in Missouri, Senator. [Laughter] Actually, I wasn't his first choice to come tonight. [Laughter] Laura is stuck on the ranch. [Laughter] But she sends her very best to Kit and to Linda.

Just as a kind of step back, I am really fortunate that Laura Bush said yes when I asked her to marry me. She is a great First Lady and a fabulous wife. I appreciate—you know, Senator Bond and I both married above ourselves. [Laughter] And it's great to see Linda. She's done a lot for him. She shortened his speeches and shortened his waistline. [Laughter] He's getting in fighting form for the '04 elections.

I'm also honored to be here with former Senator Jack Danforth. What a distinguished citizen of your State he is. He's working hard to bring peace to the Sudan. It's about as tough as an assignment as somebody can be given. But because of his steady demeanor and patience and his faith in freedom and peace, I think we'll achieve peace in the Sudan, and Jack Danforth will deserve a lot of credit.

I'm also honored to be here with the junior Senator from the great State of Missouri, a man who's doing a fabulous job on your behalf, Senator Jim Talent.

Speaking about Missouri citizens doing a fine job, John Ashcroft is a very good Attorney General. I am proud of the job he is doing. You trained him well. [Laughter]

Also traveling with me today is another member of my Cabinet, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a friend of the veterans, Tony Principi. Thank you for coming, Mr. Secretary. He and I were at the American